

Jay McShann to serve as Regents' Lecturer

May 27, 1982

Legendary jazz pianist and band leader Jay McShann, a major catalyst in the creation of the Kansas City style of jazz, is scheduled to serve as a Regents' Lecturer at the University of California, San Diego.

His appointment at UCSD is sponsored by the Black Performing Arts Program and the Department of Music.

McShann, regarded by many as "the world's greatest blues pianist," will be on the UCSD campus Tuesday, June 1, through Friday, June 4. During his visit he will meet with Department of Music faculty and students, conduct a lecture/discussion, and attend a showing of the film "The Last of the Blue Devils," a movie about Kansas City jazz.

The lecture/discussion is scheduled from noon to 1:30 p.m. Wednesday, June 2, in room B-210 in the Mandeville Center for the Performing Arts. "The Last of the Blue Devils" will be shown at noon on Friday, June 4, in room B-210 of the Mandeville Center. Both events are open to the public.

McShann is credited as one of the developers of a style of early big band music which revolutionized not only the genre of jazz, but all of American music. The music represented a synthesis of the New Orleans style, blues, boogie-woogie, and spawned the earliest seeds of bebop. McShann's ability as a band leader helped him discover and present the next generation of jazz illuminaries, most notably Charlie "Bird" Parker.

McShann now represents the last living link with a formative period in the development of black American culture. His career serves as an indicator of an extremely significant era which revolved around Negro migration northward and the Pendergast machine which abetted the growth of jazz in Kansas City.

"The Last of the Blue Devils" tells the story of the music that came from this era. Many of the major jazz innovators of the day had their roots in Kansas City including Count Basie, Lester Young, Buster Smith, Eddie Durham, Big Joe Turner and Jay McShann.

Many of these great musicians returned 40 years later to the old union hall in Kansas City. The film captures this reunion and tells their story through their words and music interspersed by rare vintage material of many of them.

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